Islam —
My Only Choice

by

Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc.
U.S.A.

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Founder of the Woking Muslim Mission, England, and 'The Islamic Review'

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ISLAM —
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1. The historicity of faiths and their founders

All religions are a matter of history. Even with Islam, the latest of all, more than thirteen hundred years have passed since its birth, and if a man must look to some Holy Scripture for the light he has to receive from a religion, no religion should claim our allegiance unless its record is absolutely unimpeachable on the score of authenticity. In this respect Islam seems to me to possess merits of its own — merits which attach to no other religion. For example, the scriptures of all other religions have now been found, as is even admitted by their respective adherents, to be wanting in genuineness. Even Rabbis and high dignitaries of the church are today ceasing to believe in the authenticity of the Holy Bible. The followers of Zoroastrianism can only point to five or six verses that have come to them in their original purity, out of all the revealed mass ascribed to that great prophet of Persia. Vedicism, popularly known as Hinduism, presents another insurmountable difficulty. The Holy Vedas were written in a language now obsolete and what we should call "dead"; no one in India speaks it or understands it. The Vedic verses are susceptible of contradictory interpretations; they have given rise to innumerable sects, who differ from each other even in the fundamentals of their religion while they all receive their inspiration from the same Book. There are atheists, theists, agnostics and deists, image-worshippers and image-breakers, among Hindus, but they all take the same Book as the authority to substantiate their respective views. The translation of the Vedas given by one class of Hindus is condemned by the others.

On the other hand, al-Quran, the Holy Book of Islam, is admitted by friend and foe to be the very words revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Book has maintained its purity till now. Fortunately we live in times when reliable criticism has established the above facts, and its verdict has not been questioned. Now whatever may be the worth of the teachings of a religion, I think I could not consider or accept its claims when the very source of our information with respect to it is of a dubious character. From this point of view I think I am justified in saying that there is no comparison between Islam and other religions.

Founders of religions.

I was constrained to come to the same conclusion as to the founders of the various religious systems. The Vedic religion is the oldest of all; but we know nothing about the authors or recipients of Vedic revelations excepting their names, and these are but incidentally mentioned at the beginning of the different Vedic Mantras (hymns). Similarly, the strictly historical aspect of the Lord of Christianity is not free from doubt and suspicion. Even if Jesus may be admitted to be an historic character, we know very little of him. Mary, we read, gave birth to the illustrious Nazarene; but soon after the event she and her husband fled from Judaea with the child; and after some twelve years Jesus is seen in synagogues finding fault with the Rabbis and joining issue with the teachers of Judaism. Then the curtain drops again. Another gap of some eighteen years and the master comes back out of an Essenic monastery and is seen on the banks of the River Jordan. But his ministry was too short for him to become our perfect specimen and guide in the manifold and divine walks of human life. A few sermons, a few miracles, a few prayers accompanied by a few curses are not enough to give humanity a religion. His movements are of meteoric character which presents few incidents of note and consequence, excepting his crucifixion. Moses was no doubt a great law-giver, an historic character, liberator of his nation from their bondage in Egypt, worker of wonders and performer of miracles, but not

an example for practical purposes in real life. In a word, the life of all these founders is enshrouded in much mystery.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad.

My surprise knew no bounds when I began to read of the Prophet Muhammad. Like a panorama the events of his life passed before my eyes one after the other. From the cradle to the grave everything of note in his life is narrated and preserved in a well-authenticated record. I was amazed to find in him an assemblage of the best of characteristics so rare in others. I am at a loss to understand how he could unite in himself all the best qualities of discrepant characters. He is meek and at the same time courageous; modest as a maiden but the bravest of the soldiers on a battlefield. While with children, loved for his playfulness and endearing talk to the little ones; when in the company of sages and old men, respected for his wisdom and farsightedness. Truthful, honest, trustworthy; a reliable friend, a loving father and husband, a dutiful son, and a helpful brother, Muhammad is the same man whether in adversity or prosperity; affluence or indigence cannot change him; unruffled in his temperament whether in peace or in war. Kind and hospitable, liberal in giving but abstemious for himself. In short, judge the Holy Prophet Muhammad from whatever angle of human character you will, and he is nowhere found wanting.

With a critical eye, I studied all that has been said about him by his opponents. They could not lay a finger on a single flaw in his private character. It is perfect. And whatever has been said against his public character in one or two things, involves really a matter of principle. They say he had more than one wife; that he waged war; that he did this, that and the other; but before we judge him in these matters we have to decide as to the validity of the principles under which he worked. If polygamy is a matter of necessity in certain circumstances and an economic measure sometimes, then why find fault with Muhammad, when all the great men and benefactors of humanity, especially in the world of religion, have all of them had more than one wife? As to the use of the sword, the whole

world until now has taken the greatest pride in unsheathing the weapon. War has hitherto been an indispensable institution. A prophet was needed to teach the world the true ethics of war, and who can deny the nobility of Muhammad in this respect? He unsheathed the sword only to crush evil and defend truth. With great care I read the accounts of every war waged by him and they were all in self-defence.

There is something unique in this great man; he is the only teacher among the noble race of prophets who brought his mission to success. Jesus was crushed by evil, and words of despair and despondency were on his lips on the Cross. Muhammad really crushed the serpent, but just in the moments of his victory, when the real "generation of vipers" was at his feet, his character revealed another noble aspect — that of forgiveness. No student of history can read the conquest of Makka by the Holy Prophet Muhammad without bowing down to that great hero. He not only forgives his cruel oppressors, but raises them to places of dignity and honour. Who knows what Jesus would have done if he had achieved any victory over his enemies? After all, he said that he had not come to send peace on the earth, but a sword.[1] Moses, Rama-Chandra and Krishna, the other great teachers in the world of religion, disclosed not a gleam of mercy in their dealings with their enemies.

1. Matthew 10 : 34.

2. The kaleidoscopic view of religion

Hinduism.

It did not take me long to pass in review the various religious persuasions with their tenets and doctrines. Whatever may have been the original form of Hinduism, it is now one vast accretion of ceremonialism and sacrifice, this being the only feature common to its numberless sects; beyond this there is no meeting-ground among them. In fact, there does not exist a definition of Hinduism wide enough to comprise all its sections and sub-divisions. Animism, element-worship, hero-worship, polytheism in its worst shapes, monotheism, though not in its pure form — all come under the heading of Hinduism. It possesses its philosophy, but it is a philosophy which has no bearing whatever on practical life; it tries to solve certain riddles — for example the problem of ultimate pain and pleasure, and here it speaks of the transmigration of the soul — but all this is a species of mental luxury possessing no practical advantage. I admit that ceremonialism and sacrifices are not without their uses, but they are of secondary importance — a means to certain ends — whereas in Hinduism they have become essentials. Again, these Hindu rituals were intended to meet certain local and topical needs, and cannot therefore be of use to alien races and later generations.

Judaism.

Judaism brought light and culture into the world, but in the course of time it, too, became merged in ceremonialism and sacrifice. The vice of ceremonial piety lies in the fact that when

once a person has observed its demands he thinks himself to be better than his neighbour, no matter what crime he may commit. For this very reason the Brahmins in Hinduism and the Pharisees in Judaism considered themselves absolved of all the duties laid upon other members of society. Jesus did not come with a new religion, nor did he found a church; he was a Jew of the Jews. Jealous for the religion taught by Moses, he came to redeem the teachings of the Master from the formalism of the Pharisees. He had the courage to expose their hollowness and hypocrisy. In short, his aim was to reform Judaism and to restore it to its pristine purity, but his enemies would not allow him to do so, and so he failed in the end. Then St. Paul came on the scene, but instead of carrying on the work of Jesus, he grafted on the old faith something quite new and repugnant to it — the religion of the Blood and its grace. It is called the "New Covenant", but it seems to me but a reappearance of old paganism with a change of name and setting.

Christianity.

I sum up here the story of Christianity in a few words: Man drowned in sin and God alienated from him and in anger. To appease His wrath He sends His own son to the world through a virgin's womb. The son is brought to the Cross and pays the penalty for all human sin, thus washing away the sins of humanity with his blood. He dies for all, and then through his resurrection brings new life to mankind. This is the superstructure of the Pauline schism as it was never taught by the Lord of Christianity. But it is not a new revelation. It has now come to light that Jesus as portrayed by Paul and others as "the new Adam" is only just the last of the virgin-born Sun-gods — Mithra, Apollo, Bacchus, Horus, Osiris and others; all of them born at the first hour of the 25th of December. They all led a peaceful mission; the first miracle that all performed had some connection with wine; they all declared that they had come to save humanity through their blood; they all went to death at the third hour of Friday some time in the end of March; they all remained in the tomb for two days; they all rose again on Easter

Sunday; they all ascended into heaven with a promise to return.

Thus, centuries before the construction of the Christian Church, different countries had already evolved a system of religion which Christianity repeated word by word in the writings of the early Fathers. In the names of these virgin-born incarnates people were initiated into their cult through baptism. Their votaries worshipped the Cross, and their great festivals were Easter and Christmas. In fact, the Roman Catholic Church, the first Church on Pauline lines after Jesus, is just a replica of the old cult of mystery; and Christian worship remains sun-worship with all its old features. How can we stigmatize Paganism as a false religion when all its features did but forestall the official Church in the West? If Paganism is falsehood, the formal Church must, *ipso facto*, be falsehood too. Anyhow, current Christianity is not a religion if by religion is meant a code of life that may help man to live worthily in this world and in the hereafter.

Islam.

Viewed from this standpoint again, I say, Islam is my only choice. It is a religion of action, of good morals and ethics; a religion simple and practical; if I am asked to subscribe to its doctrines, I can do so freely: they are not dogmatic in their nature. All Islamic tenets are reasonable and consistent with intelligence. They have a direct bearing on life; and here I will go more into detail.

Doubtless Islam is not free from some sort of formalities. Muslims also make sacrifices, but my happiness knew no bounds when I read in the Quran:

> "It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is this, that one should believe in God and the last day and the angels and the book and the prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keep up prayer and

> pay the poor-rate; and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflict — these are they who are true (to themselves), and these are they who guard (against evil)." [1]

What a wonderful, decisive and bold statement! It brushes ceremonialism completely away. Islam has a few formalities but they seem to me to be essential formalities — one of them being the turning of the face, when in prayer, towards Makka. It indicates the place that gave birth to Islam, and is hence a necessity; but the above verse says that doing so *in itself* is not a virtue unless thereby we are helped to observe certain beliefs and actions which are there set out. In fact, Muslims turn their faces to Makka to remember and renew the inspiration they first received from that sacred place; and if turning our faces to Makka is in itself of no value, then what of other ceremonial acts?

Muslims do observe sacrifice, but not to appease Divine wrath. One of the objects is to "Feed the poor man who is contented, and the beggar".[2] This institution also supplies an occasion for being benevolent to others, and it is a symbol of the religion of God; as the Quran says, we have to submit to His will as the animals under the knife have to submit to ours. And then a verse on the subject in the following thundering words denudes sacrifices of the merits that had been attached to them by other religions — such as the propitiation of Divine anger:

> "Not their flesh, nor their blood, reaches God, but to Him is acceptable the guarding (against evil) on your part; thus has He made them subservient to you, that you may magnify God because He has guided you aright; and give good news to those who do good (to others)." [3]

1. 2:177.
2. 22:36.
3. 22:37.

I know of no other formality in Islam; and if ceremonial piety is in itself of no consequence, then Hinduism and Judaism cannot satisfy human needs as a code of religion. Christianity no doubt did away with all the ritual that Jesus observed himself, because his personal sacrifice, as they say, atoned for it and absolved the believers in the blood from the ceremonial burden. But another set of rituals and formalities entered into the Church as a legacy from Paganism, and the position is worse than before.

I cannot conclude these general remarks on religion and turn to the special doctrines of Islam before emphasizing one thing, though I have made reference to it in the foregoing: that is the necessity for Quranic Revelation at a time when the old Books of God had become hopelessly mixed with folk-lore. Every religion of the world has based its teachings on a Revelation from on High. It has pleased the Lord to guide humanity into the right path by revealing His Will to the world. The position is quite a tenable one, but if His Revelation sometimes suffers in purity and becomes vitiated, should He not send another Revelation to take the place of the old one? The Lord of the Universe observes the same course in all His dispensations. He creates things for our use, and when they disappear or become impaired or allayed there comes a fresh supply of such needful things. What is true in physical dispensations must be true also in the spiritual sphere. How can a believer shut his eyes to the necessity of a new Revelation if the old one has admittedly become corrupt? But none of all the Revelations given to the various nations of the world in olden days had remained in their original form — a fact now admitted by all — at that period of the Christian era, and a new Revelation, the Quran, was a necessity.

3. Revealed books and their contents

Though all the peoples in the world were respectively given a book for their guidance from the Lord, they are all lost today with the exception of the Vedas, the Bible, and the Quran. The first two scriptures are of a kindred nature, but the third exhibits an absolutely different character. The Vedas and the Bible speak respectively of some particular nations, the so-called "chosen people" of God or gods; while the Quran is neither a narrative of a tribe nor a story of any individual. It concerns itself exclusively with man in general. Man and his God is its chief theme.

The Bible.

After speaking of the creation of the world and man, the chief interest of the Hebrew Scripture lies in one particular branch of the human race — the descendants of Abraham through Isaac. It speaks of the migration of the Israelites from the land of Abraham, their settlement in Egypt, their subsequent bondage under the Egyptian yoke, their liberation by Moses under God's command; then comes a mention of their religious and ceremonial code; again their wandering in the wilderness, their conquest of the promised land, and the establishment of the Hebrew governments, their grandeur and splendour; their subsequent iniquities and misdeeds; their stubbornness and vicious indulgences, and finally prophetic references by Jesus to their downfall. All these facts are arrayed in the Book, one after the other, as it were, on an historical basis. The Bible also contains a narrative of the Hebrew Patriarchs, who impart religious

teaching accompanied by comprehensive curses directed against their enemies. The Book also speaks of the visitations of God from time to time and the appearance of angels with good news. In short, the Bible is a complete story of the rise and fall of the Hebrews, with Moses at their head as the lawgiver and bringer of good tidings of the coming rise, and with Jesus, the last of the race, shedding tears of grief on the imminent fall.

The Vedas.

Just as the Holy Bible concerns itself with the Hebrews, so the collection of the Vedas speaks of another race from Central Asia called Aryans, who crossed the river Indus and took up their abode in the western part of India. The Hindu Book speaks of the Aryan settlement in India as of an agricultural class, where they sang hymns in praise of the elements or other manifestations of nature which sent timely rains to fertilize their lands and bring them good crops. It speaks of their rituals and sacrifices, it refers to their fights with the aborigines of the country and the final victory of the former over the latter; their civic and marital life; the establishment of their governments and their other occupations; and in the end their self-indulgence and luxury, all painted in poetical strains.

The Quran.

Thus the two books above are more or less a history of the two tribes, with the mention of religion and its accessories as a matter of incident. Al-Quran, on the other hand, is purely a book of God's religion given to man. The elevation and progress of the human race or its degradation or downfall are the chief topics of the Arab Revelation. The Quran, doubtless, speaks of certain persons and certain nations, but such allusions are not the main object of the Book; they come in by way of illustration. For example, the Book lays down certain principles and doctrines for human edification; it warns man against the deeds that are sure to bring him to the lowest ebb; it reads him lessons of morality and of ethics; it speaks of spirituality and godliness; and it is in elucidation of these teachings that it

makes reference to events in the lives of certain men — prophets and their enemies — and nations. It is for this reason that the Quran has not generally given full accounts of the people thus alluded to. It is not a collection of stories, but a book of economic, moral and spiritual instruction. The Bible and the Vedas may, perchance, give inspiration to the descendants of those for whom they were first revealed, but they cannot be of any great interest to mankind at large; while the Quran, on the other hand, is the book for all men of every time and clime, and cannot fail to command universal interest.

4. The object of revelation

Neither the Vedas nor the Bible seem to specify any object of universal interest for their revelation. God no doubt spoke to Moses at Sinai and ordered him to go to Pharaoh with a message demanding freedom for the Israelites. After the Exodus, He again spoke to Moses and gave him the Ten Commandments; and Moses when in need of guidance goes to his Lord from time to time and the Lord expresses His will for the guidance of His people. Similarly, whenever the chosen people are in difficulty or in trouble Jehovah sends His angels with words to meet the occasion. On the same lines we find various *Mantras* (hymns) in the Vedas, revealed to the old Hindu *Rishis*. The Ten Commandments undoubtedly promulgate the lines of action necessary to form a society. Sociable as we are, we must speak the truth; we must respect the lives, property and womenfolk of our neighbours; we must revere our parents, and, to give rest to our body, we must observe the Sabbath. I think any human society desirous of keeping itself in a healthy condition could have discovered these principles even without the help of any revelation.

But the Quranic Revelation is far above these primitive and temporal needs. It comes to raise man to the highest height to which he is able to soar. The first call that came to the Prophet Muhammad in the cave at Hira is a call free from all personal or racial elements. It is a call for the uplifting of man in general. The Holy Prophet Muhammad was not called upon to serve his own nation, nor did the heavenly dove descend from above to choose the Son of God from among his fellow countrymen. The Prophet Muhammad is inspired to raise his fellow-beings, wherever they may be, from the depth of degradation to the zenith

of greatness. His first Revelation is as follows:

> "Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is most Honourable, Who taught (to write), with the pen, taught man what he knew not. Nay! man is most surely inordinate. Because he sees himself free from want." [1]

Man is ordered through Prophet Muhammad to read, to cultivate the art of writing, for the spread of books and enlightenment, and to discover sciences not known before, thereby bringing humanity to a position most honourable, because his Creator is Himself most honourable and His creation should index the greatness of the Maker. Matter reaches its physical consummation in the form of man, and Nature cannot improve upon it any further. But the same matter evolves a new thing in the human frame — human consciousness — the sum total of the passions, which when refined give rise to intellect, sentiment, sociability, morality, ethics, religion and spirituality. All these divine elements, intended to create a great civilization and to bring man to his real dignity, have been reposed in human nature. But as a full-fledged man on the physical plane evolves from a clot of blood in the womb, so was human consciousness in clot condition at the appearance of the Prophet Muhammad, who was deputed by God in the same verse to show his fellow beings the right path, as revealed to him by God, that will bring forth all that is noble and good in man.

Revelation to exalt man.

This grand object the Holy Book takes for its revelation and makes mention of it in its very beginning.[2] When it defines the most exalted position which man is entitled to achieve, it also indicates the lowest degradation to which he may descend. In the story of Adam[3] the high and low conditions of man are defined. He is the vicegerent of God on earth. He is to receive homage from the angels of heaven and earth; and for this

1. The Holy Quran, 96 : 1–7. 2. *ibid.*, 2 : 5. 3. *ibid.*, 2 : 30–39.

purpose the sun and the moon, with all other manifestations of Nature, as the Quran says, have been made subservient to man.[4] All this he can achieve through knowledge, but if he is led astray from the right path he will be deprived of the means that contribute to his happiness.[5] With all our civilization we have not as yet attained the height which we have to achieve under the directions of the Last Book. We have not secured the position of being able to bring the sun and the moon into subjection. This is the goal which the Quran prescribes for us in our sojourn on the earth.

In this connection the Quran further reveals to us that we possess the highest capabilities but as we have arisen from an animal state and carry with us certain carnal cravings, the Book warns us that our way to the goal is beset with difficulties. We are liable to be degraded to the lowest of the low and therefore we need guidance to help us upwards in our evolutionary journey and to save us from falling into pitfalls:

> "Certainly We created man in the best make. Then We render him the lowest of the low, except those who believe and do good — so theirs is a reward never to be cut off." [6]

This is another purpose of Quranic revelation. We are in the dark and we need a light, and the Book claims to be that light.[7] Let St. Paul blackguard human nature; Islam says that we possess an immaculate nature which is inherently free from the taint of sin. In this, Islam differs from Christianity. If hell is the reward of sin and heaven is reserved for those who leave this earth sinless, Islam and Christianity advance two different and contradictory propositions. Christianity says that man is born in sin, while according to Islam he is sinless at his birth. If a child, therefore, dies at his very birth, he must go to heaven, under Islamic teaching, but he is foredoomed to hell according to Christian principles. In other words, heaven is our birthright

4. *ibid.*, 14 : 32–33; 16 : 12.
5. *ibid.*, 2 : 36.
6. *ibid.*, 95 : 4–6.
7. *ibid.*, 14 : 1.

under Islam. We may lose it by our subsequent misdeeds. But according to Christianity we are born for hell unless reclaimed by our faith in the Blood. Similarly, sin is a heritage according to Church beliefs, but is an after-acquisition under Islam, and can be avoided.

Thus the sole object of Christian Revelation is to bring man out of the slough of sin up to the brink of virtue, but Islam finds man already on its banks at his birth and comes to raise him to its highest flight that will bring him near the precincts of Divinity. What a world of difference is here!

Quranic revelation is rational, not dogmatic.

To resume the subject, there is another marked difference between the last and the ancient revelations. The Quran is rational in its teachings, while the Hindu and Hebrew Books are dogmatic in imparting their messages. Like a pedagogue or a father whose words are law or gospel to his pupils or children, the Bible and the Vedas assert their precepts and principles in a spirit that seems to expect no opposition or doubt from their respective recipients. The Books speak of God, of angels, of resurrection, and the Last Day; of Divine messengership and accountability for present actions in the hereafter; but they make no attempt to substantiate these verities by any intelligent arguments. They claim nothing to meet the demand of a sceptical mind. Perhaps the human mind at the time of these revelations had not as yet crossed the frontiers of infancy, and was groping in the avenue of sentimentality.

The Quran seems to belong to a time when the human mind had developed enough to give precedence to intellect over blind belief. For it also speaks of the above-mentioned truths, but with logic and reason. To bring home its doctrines to its reader's mind, it makes frequent appeal to our understanding and rational judgment. It draws our attention to various manifestations of nature as evidence of what it enunciates. For instance, there are logical reasons and rational arguments in the Book to prove the existence of God, of the day of resurrection, the necessity of Divine revelation, and many other things. The Muslim Scripture

would not ask its readers to accept any of its teachings except on the strength of reasoning. This is perhaps why Islam has not observed any atheistic or sceptical movement or disposition in its ranks; while no sooner did the Church persecution become relaxed and intellect freed from its iron grip than secularizing and free thought flourished apace.

In India there has perhaps been no such marked struggle between religion and agnosticism, for the Vedas favoured atheistic and sceptical tendencies equally with other forms of Hindu schism. And here, again, Islam and the other two religions present a most striking contrast. Education has alienated the human mind from the Church religion. It has brought forth a similar revolt against Hinduism, especially in these latter days. But modern science has only served to strengthen Muslim belief in the Quranic truths. We are rational beings. Reason and logic play a prominent part in all our beliefs and persuasions. No other book but the Quran, therefore, will meet the demand of our time.

Articles of faith.

Again, the Christian and Hindu revelations do not specifically speak of the articles of their faith; each inquirer must gather them for himself from these Books. In the Christian Churches the task fell to the Church councils. The articles of the Christian faith as promulgated by the Fathers were collected in the Book of Common Prayer, and have been the object of successive revisions from time to time.

In Hinduism, want of a definite statement in the Vedas as to what were the articles of faith in the Vedic religion gave rise to innumerable sects that differ from each other even in their fundamental tenets. From such a fate the Quran has saved the Muslims; for it has clearly laid down in various verses the Islamic articles of faith.[11]

11. See 2:3–4, 177, 285; 4:136.

5. Articles of faith in Islam

Īmān, the word which in Arabic corresponds to "faith", means knowledge of a thing coupled with a conviction as to its truth so strong as to incite us to strive our utmost to live up to it. The word does not, in Quranic terminology, include beliefs which cannot be translated into action, or are not concerned with action. Consequently, belief in something accepted as verity on the basis of a dogma does not come within the category of religious beliefs in Islam. In fact, dogmatic doctrines have no significance for a Muslim. Faith, however, in the Quranic sense of the word, plays a most important part in moulding every human word or action. All our movements are the portraits of such of our concepts as are based upon sure and certain faith. Every item of our routine, however insignificant, is but a motion picture of our belief in the existence or the non-existence of things. Any change in such a belief straightaway produces a change in the routine. Even a slight movement of our lips, or of any other portion of the body, springs from some belief or other. For instance, we cannot utter a word unless we believe as well in the audibility and articulation of the sound we make as in the ability of our hearer to hear and give to our words the same meanings which they convey to us. Similar belief is always present in our mind concerning everything that emanates from us.

This emphasizes the importance of a vigilant and wise choice of faith in every avenue of our existence, since soundness of action follows soundness of belief; and more especially is this so in our religious beliefs, seeing that no other belief approaches them in strength and in influence on the ordering of our life.

Beliefs of religions unsupported by reason.

Every religion lays down certain articles of faith as its basic principles, demanding from its adherents an implicit faith therein. These basic principles may or may not appeal to our intelligence, or serve any useful purpose for us in this life, but it is nevertheless claimed for them that they possess unique merits in securing salvation and happiness in the life beyond the grave for those who hold them.

As to that life, almost every religion strikes the same note. Faith in tenets diametrically opposed to each other in teaching have by different religions been invested with similar merits that are to accrue to the believer in his life after death. If a faith in the divinity of A and B, for instance, brings salvation to the believer according to one religion, it dooms him to everlasting punishment in the life to come, according to the other. No religion, on the other hand, has any decisively logical support for its assertions. No one as yet has returned from behind the veil to bear witness to the truth of his faith. Even "seance-phenomena", apart from all considerations of their futility or otherwise, are not reliable evidence that such a thing has occurred. The French spiritualist, for example, accepts the transmigration of the soul as a truth on the strength of phenomenal testimony, while his colleague in England will disbelieve in the doctrine on evidence precisely similar. Under these circumstances I am forced to conclude that a religion's claim for belief in its doctrines should never be heeded, unless those doctrines satisfy our intelligence and have been tested in the crucible of utility as regards our present life.

Harmful beliefs of some religions.

A plunge in the dark is a dangerous proceeding, but it is infinitely more dangerous to believe in things that not only have no bearing on our present life but sometimes are actually harmful in their effects on the building of our character. By way of illustration I may refer to doctrines like the Atonement, Predestination, Fatalism and the Transmigration of the Soul. No one can prove any of these by reference to anything in this

present life. They may seem plausible to some, but belief in them mainly concerns things as to which we are utterly in the dark. On the other hand, they produce no wholesome effects on this life, nor do they leave any incentive for action. In fact, when taken literally they prompt no action at all.

Belief in atonement.

Fear of punishment is, in most cases, the only deterring influence in crushing evil. The pressure of public opinion and legal penalties are the great discouragers of wrong, and wherever they relax their hold, evil begins to crop up. Thus, for example, prostitution, gambling and drinking have been the curse of Christian nations, chiefly for the above reasons. Public opinion in Christian lands is not strong enough to stop evils, while legislation, on its criminal side, is nearly silent on the subject. The fear of punishment in the life to come acts as a deterrent in this respect in non-Christian races; but this can hardly be so with believers in the Atonement. If God could not find any other remedy for the cleansing of human sin than that of sending His own sons from time to time to pay its penalty — since Jesus was only the last of the Pagan Christs who came to give their lives for human salvation — then there is no need of any good action on our part. There are very few of us who pursue virtue for its own sake. It is the reward of virtue, especially seen in its efficacy in counterbalancing the effects of sin, that we fulfill the law and lead a good life. But if the same thing is attainable merely by our belief in the Grace of Blood, few would think it worthwhile to bear the hardships and trials of the life of righteousness. Belief in the Atonement obviates the necessity for action. So it was held by Luther. Though the Romish Church attaches importance to good actions also, yet logically Luther is in the right in his conclusions.

Belief in fatalism and re-incarnation.

Similarly, our belief in Predestination — another Christian verity — Fatalism and the Transmigration of the Soul, weakens such impulses as we may have towards action. If everything in

the form of pain and pleasure in this life has already been chalked out for us in the past, as the principle of the Transmigration of the Soul teaches, and no effort on our part can alter what is to be, then no moral schemes for avoiding adversity or achieving happiness are of the slightest avail. Similarly, if evil follows a man as the shadow of his actions in a past life, he need not strive to free himself from its hold, since it is unavoidable. If, for example, he is suffering from fever in consequence of some wrongdoing in his past incarnation under the law of "Karma", no medical skill can cure him. Nay, it obviates any necessity for medical attention and, I may say, for the profession itself. It would put a stop to all advancement in that branch of science, and the same can be presumed in regard to other departments of human activity. I admit that believers in these principles do not generally show apathy towards progress. They are interested in it and sometimes contribute to its advancement, but this only means that they do not faithfully believe in things they hold as articles of faith. Their actions belie their belief.

Universal belief in a Deity.

A word here on the subject of the existence of God will not be out of place. Belief in the Deity has been universally the *sine qua non* of religion from time immemorial. The worshipping instinct in man has always found its gratification in directing his devotional feelings to some kind of deity. Buddhism is an exception to this rule, since no mention of God is contained in its scriptures. But the passion for worshipping established its supremacy there very speedily. All that is reserved for God in other religions goes to Buddha. All Buddhistic countries teem with his images. Their temple is another house of worship for idols, where the worshippers are seen sitting or standing before the images of Lord Buddha, with the same postures and gesticulations as are adopted elsewhere by the worshippers of God. Buddha is addressed in the same terms and receives the same adoration and homage as are ascribed by other religions to God.

In short, this passion for devotion to some supreme Being is the dominant feature of man's mind. From a stone to a son

of a woman, he has adored various manifestations of nature as his God, and he has been none the worse for it — seeing that he has been able to keep a certain moral order under any system of worship. The worship of idols has at times inspired him with noble and lofty feelings, like those which have been observed in the most worthy of the worshippers of God. Prayers addressed to images made by man's own hands have in their beauty, grandeur and sincerity surpassed even the devotional utterances of the holiest of monotheists while adoring the Most High. The Vishnuvites, for example — a class of Hindu idol worshippers in India — are often strict observers of morality. Their piety sometimes surpasses the righteousness of a virtuous Unitarian.

Belief in One God should lead to virtue.

The tenets of Islam, however, supported by culture and progress, have played havoc with old beliefs, and the futility of such old beliefs has at last become exposed. They have lost all the force they once possessed for the moulding of good character. The world at large is on the high road to belief in Unity, and even those who, like the Christians, still evince some sort of polytheistic tendencies, are now almost prepared to apologize for them. Belief in the unity of God in its purest form, when rendered into action in our daily life, would — as I will describe later on — merely, without doubt, bring our civilization to its climax; but a lip belief in the oneness of God is in my humble opinion, less meritorious than the different forms which polytheism has adopted in the cases above mentioned. Orthodoxy may take strong exception to my statement, but I would make bold to say that a polytheist who leads a virtuous life earns more merit in the eye of the Lord than a wicked person with all his belief in the unity of God.

I also say that I see no excellence in such a belief if it exerts no influence in beautifying the character. It is useless to sing hymns at the top of our voices if we are not leading, and do not lead, godly lives. God does not stand in need of any adoration from us; and if He does, He is not worthy of the great names

with which He is revered. I would go further than that; I would say that if our worship of Him lies only in bringing offerings and sacrifices to His altar, and in the recital of praises and thanks to Him, it is neither creditable to God nor profitable to man. He is only another fetish and the biggest in the world of religion. God should stand above these things. He needs no praise from us. The Quran is very explicit on the point. It says that our extolling or praising God does not contribute to His glory, nor does blasphemy retract at all from His grandeur and dignity. Our prayers to Him should consist of such expressions, whether praise or thanksgiving to God or supplications to Him for some favour, as may set us to work out our own power and ability to our best advantage.

The basic Muslim prayer.

In this respect my choice falls on the prayer that Islam prescribes for a Muslim. It is the opening chapter of the Quran:

> "(All) praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. The Beneficent, the Merciful. Master of the day of requital. Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help. Guide us on the right path, the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray."

It begins with words of praise and thanksgiving, but if both these actions do not go beyond the lips of the worshipper they are of no avail in Islam.

The opening words of the Muslim prayer are: *al-hamdu li-llāhi rabbi-l-'ālamīn,* meaning, "All praises and thanksgiving are for God". The word *hamd* in Arabic is very rich in meaning. It conveys four ideas. First, the word has an exclusive use. It is reserved for the praise of the Lord. Secondly, it conveys the idea of perfection; the worshipper sees in God all the best and most excellent attributes. Thirdly, it expresses a longing desire on the part of the worshipper to possess all such attributes to the extent of his abilities, and hence his prayers for them. Fourthly, it means thanks, that is, for his possession of capacity for

cultivating such attributes in himself. In fact, the action of praise psychologically consists of the said four ingredients. Perfection in beauty, sublimity and goodness on the one side, and our lack of them with desire to own them on the other, move our admiration and praise for the owner of those excellencies; but we never desire to possess a thing unless we own the ability to do so, and hence our gratitude for it.

Thus the word *hamd* on the lips of a Muslim while at prayer is no empty word of compliment that may please the ears of the Deity, but a genuine expression of a genuine desire to mould his life on Divine lines; and to this end the Muslims recite, after the word *hamd,* four names of God which are the most beautiful among their class. They are: *Rabb, Rahmān, Rahīm* and *Mālik-i-yaum-i-dīn.* Each of them, if followed by us, would make a millennium for the world. *Rabb* means Creator, Nourisher, Maintainer and Bringer of faculties to perfection. *Rahmān* means All-Beneficent Lord whose blessings go to all, unmerited, and undeserved, and not by way of compensation for any good action but of His own goodness. *Rahīm* means One who rewards an action manifold. *Mālik* means the owner or the king of judgment, whose sentence of punishment is only for reclamation and is not the fruit of anger on account of man's disobedience. The beauty of these four attributes is that in them God does not observe any distinction of class and creed among men. The God of Islam is the God of all nations, who is impartial in the dispensation of His blessings. I wish the rulers of the earth who hold sway over other races could show so broadminded and liberal an attitude, for then the burden of foreign rule would lose its curse. A Muslim says his prayers five times a day, which reminds him of these four Divine moulds in which he has to cast his daily life. High morality in Islam consists in the reflection of Divine morals — a truth that has recently dawned on the minds of Western theologians.

Next, the worshipper speaks of his service to God, and the best religious service. According to Islam, this consists of doing actions in conformity with the requirements of the Divine

Names. The Prayer then speaks of things for which a Muslim has to pray to his God. He must not pray for earthly good, but for knowledge — knowledge of the right path that may bring him under the grace and blessings of God, and keep him away from wickedness and error.

Comparison of deities.

I have made a somewhat wide digression from my subject, but it was not without its relevancy when dealing with the worshipping side of our nature. I have said that if the worship of a deity produces no moral effect on our life, it need not be pursued. Similarly, if adoring one deity is equal in its results to the worshipping of another, the choice among them is immaterial. By way of illustration I would take man-worship from among the various forms of polytheism as being the last and most refined. Jesus is the last of those favoured persons who from time to time have been placed on the throne of God by their fellowmen. And here I would mention two other persons who besides Jesus still command human allegiance as God. These are Krishna and Rama-Chandra — the two Indian deities — who were adored as such a thousand years before the birth of Christianity. Like Jesus, they are Eastern and come of coloured races, but as gods they are superior to him in many respects. They are more historic than the Nazarene. They can claim more genuineness for their life-records, though these were not free from folk-lore. Their precepts and other utterances are, in general, more majestic, more awe-inspiring, and of greater practical utility than visionary sermons from the Mount. Jesus came of humble parentage and did not possess even a roof for shelter, but if Rama-Chandra were a prince and later on a ruler, Krishna ruled the destinies of kings in his time. Jesus had nothing to sacrifice, as far as worldly possessions go, but the Indian gods gave up the best of worldly things in the service of humanity. Jesus was crushed by evil, but Rama-Chandra crushed evil, and Rudhra — another name for Krishna — had been the crusher of evil throughout his life. The actions ascribed to these great men by their narrators are transcendent. They are like

shadows of the powers of the Almighty while the Bible is silent in the case of the sacred Carpenter in this respect. Undoubtedly the worshippers of these Indian gods did not exhibit a high standard of morals at certain periods of their history, but it is only fair to point out that such periods corresponded with that period in the history of the world — I compare the Middle Ages in Europe — when every corner of it presented a horizon of moral darkness. Christianity was no exception, but in many ways worse.

However, I look at the subject from a different angle. If we have to seek our God in the incarnate form, I see no special reason for giving precedence to Jesus over others. Our belief in him has not helped mankind any more than the Hindu belief in Krishna and Rama-Chandra. In one respect, Christianity has been woefully at fault. In the matter of culture and civilization Christianity has proved an implacable enemy to human advancement. It crushed science as long as it had the power to do so, and would do the same today if the modern world would suffer it. Only the other day the Bishop of Ripon proposed to give scientific research a holiday for ten years. This was but an echo of the old cry of tyranny and oppression that came from the Church against culture and science in the Middle Ages, though it is clothed in the euphemisms of modern refinement.

In short, if belief in the divinity of a man has not helped the human race more than belief in the divinity of stones or elements in the days of ignorance, it is as I have shown before, not worthy of our further attention. Modern progress in the West should not be taken as the fruit of man's faith in the Church dogmas. The West made no progress so long as it was in the iron grip of Christianity.

But even our belief in the Supreme Being, or the worship of God, is of no consequence if it does not help in the betterment of our race. Religion has been regarded as a necessary human institution from the days of Adam and Eve. But it should be treated as a back number if our pursuit of it possesses no utility. The whole question depends on the articles of faith upon which

a religion insists. If it asks us to believe in such tenets as have come under discussion in these pages, I think we are none the worse for dispensing with it. But if it invites our faith in doctrines that bring out all that is noble and good in us, and urges us to use all the powers of nature, whether reposed in the human frame or in the rest of the universe, to our best advantage, then religion becomes a most essential human institution. I repeat, God is not in need of human worship, but if our worship of Him inspires us to follow His ways as they are to be observed in the universe, ways that work out the best of civilization on righteous lines, it ought to be part and parcel of our life. I would go to my God fifty times a day in such a prayerful mood, though Islam prescribes but five prayers only.

Need and importance of Law.

The greatest blessing that has come to us from science is our belief in the existence of Law and that only our submission to it can bring us to success and happiness. Law is the order of the time. Every atom of nature and its various combinations, including the human frame, owes its very existence and further development to implicit obedience to Law. From the nebulous stage, up to the human frame, everything is a slave to Law. Religion will be doing the greatest possible service to humanity if it inspires man with a strong belief in Law. Virtue and evil, both in their growth and origin, are commensurate with the strength or weakness of our belief in Law and its forces. Criminality comes to the surface in quarters where Law can be avoided without fear of detection, and it becomes absolutely non-existent if we believe in the inexorableness of its punishments.

If Law is all in all in this way, and our belief in it is the greatest factor in the building of our character and in the achievement of success, it needs our strong belief not only in its Maker, who invests it with full force in its operation, but in many other things connected with Law. Law demands as well the services of its "functionaries", who must keep it always in force, since without them it would be but a dead-letter.

Again, Law, or such portion of it as rules human destinies, whether discovered or revealed, should be preserved in such a form as may be of service to all units of humanity. It has not fallen to the lot of all men to make researches in the realms of Law, nor to be inspired by the contemplation of its source. There are but a few chosen persons of the human race who are favoured with this gift, and it is their duty to guide and enlighten their fellow men. Again, Law loses all its force, nor can it compel universal adhesion, unless and until some reward or punishment comes inevitably to its fulfiller or breaker. Lastly, there ought to be set times for such reward and punishment — when the fruits of submission or disobedience to Law should become manifest to all. Thus if Law is the lever of the whole machinery in the universe, and our belief in it works wonders for our progress, we should also, to make it a reality in our eyes, believe in the Maker of the Law, its functionaries, its record, and the custodians thereof. We must believe, too, in the reward and the punishment ordained by such an administrative system.

For illustration, take any human institution that contributes to our civilization and we shall find it revolving on the pivot of the seven principles mentioned later, with Law as one of them. Take the government of any country. No society, even in its most primitive state, can work on healthy lines without some sort of government acting in it as a sovereign political authority. It works through its laws. It must have machinery to set them in motion. It must reduce its laws to a record — they may be laws unwritten but imprinted on the tablet of the human mind — and entrust them to intermediate officials to convey to the general public. The government also needs a court of law to administrate, etc. If the Law is a thing so important, and I may say the only key to our advancement and perfection, it should be the first duty of religion to inspire in us a strong stimulus for respecting it. I find myself unable to attach any value to a faith which lacks such incentive. I cannot imagine any greater harm to the very fabric of human society than that which accrues to

us by reason of our belief in a doctrine that either weakens our sense of responsibility or enervates our energy and divests us of motive for action. A religion that belittles the importance of Law is best forgotten.

For this reason I had to give up my belief in the Atonement and other similar doctrines. I could not see, as I remarked before, any necessity for believing even in God, if belief is not attended with the results I have just mentioned. Law and its rules are the main things in the whole universe. Law demands an unswerving belief in its existence and implicit obedience. It is inexorable in awarding its penalties to its disbelievers and breakers. No other belief can save the transgressor of the Law from its demands in this life; and shall not the same apply to the hereafter? Should not religion, then, inculcate first of all the necessity and importance of our faith in Law? It must speak of other verities also, because belief in the Law, and that alone, is of no avail, if unaccompanied by belief in other essential things. Divine worship may be taken as a matter of first importance in religion, but we know nothing of God except through His ways of work in nature. Hence our worship of Him should find its real manifestation in our following His ways in our life. Our prayer or other form of adoration should act as a reminder of that Great Truth.

Submission to Divine law in Islam.

The recital of certain sacred words is not an act of worship; true worship consists in submission to His laws. In this respect I can safely say that Islam is the only representative of religion from Above. The word itself literally means submission to laws, and a Muslim is one who obeys the Law. Law, of course, means the Divine Laws, whether discovered by us as laws of nature or revealed to man by God Himself. The Quran uses several other words as synonyms of Law — ways of God, His limits and His bounds, His government, His pre-measurement of good and evil, and the Throne He sits upon, etc. These words, in fact, convey different functions and aspects of Law. It comes to prescribe limits; for, since no action in itself is either good or bad, it is

its use or application, and the circumstances under which it is used or applied, that makes it good or bad. The Law thus defines the limits under which an action brings good to its doer or doers; and in this respect it becomes a virtue. Any transgression from the prescribed bounds means wrong, wickedness, and sin.

I cannot cite a stronger statement on behalf of a revealed religion and its necessity than which I found in the last section of the second chapter of the Quran:

> "Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is God's; and whether you manifest what is in your minds or hide it, God will call you to account according to it; then He will forgive whom He pleases and chastise whom He pleases, and God has power over all things. The Messenger (Muhammad) believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers; they all believe in God and His angels and His books and His messengers: We make no difference between any of His messengers; and they say: We hear and obey, our Lord! Thy forgiveness (do we crave), and to Thee is the eventual course. God does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability; for it, is (the benefit of) what it has earned, and against it (the evil of) what it has wrought: our Lord! do not punish us if we forget or make a mistake; our Lord do not lay on us a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us; our Lord do not impose upon us that which we have not the strength to bear; and pardon us and grant us protection and have mercy on us, Thou art our Patron, so help us against the unbelieving people." [1]

First it speaks in clear terms of six things written in bold letters on every page of nature, and their existence is palpable even to a most superficial observer, since the denial of it is attended by immediate unrelenting penalty. These are the things in reality

1. The Holy Quran, 2 : 284–6.

that can rightly be given the name of Truth or Verity. The so-called verities adopted as such by various persuasions are more dogmatic.

The verities spoken of in these verses are as follows:

1. The universality of Divine Government — the working of His Law in Heaven and in the Earth.
2. Our unavoidable accountability to God for our every action hidden or manifest.
3. His law of retribution ever in operation, with occasional remission under given conditions.
4. Our ability to submit to His Laws.
5. Laws of action and their results, i.e., we reap what we sow.
6. The Hereafter — the time to bear the fruits of our actions. It may be immediate, since sometimes we are punished immediately for our wrongs, or it may be in the future — what is popularly styled the Last Day or the Day of Judgment in religious parlance.

No special revelation from God, no elaborate teaching of tutor divine is needed to bring home to us these truths. Everything in nature speaks of them. No one with a grain of wisdom in his head can deny them; which being so, the case for religion and its necessity, as well as the nature of its tenets, is obvious enough. Even an atheist must bow down to these six laws. In fact, they are his creed if we eliminate the words "God" or "His" from the above. He accepts the yoke of Law quite meekly. His only trouble is his inability to believe in the Mind from which Law emanates — a thing of easy proof in the light of modern scientific researches. Even those who take exception to some of the above-mentioned verities, for example the fourth — our ability to obey the law — are compelled to believe in the working of these six laws on the physical plane. Everything in the universe contradicts their dogma.

In this connection I would make a few remarks concerning the fundamental doctrine of Christianity — the doctrine of so-called Original Sin. If sin means our violation of Law, the doctrine falls to the ground. Admittedly we are capable of doing wrong, we violate Law, but this propensity in our nature does not deny our ability to observe it. The whole machinery of a government in human society works on the assumption that the members of such society are capable of obeying the mandates of the government. Without such assumption or belief, the very existence of working of a body like the British Parliament — and in the same category come various other legislative bodies — becomes an anomaly.

We believe in the working of the above-quoted six laws in the tangible world, but some of us do not see our way to concede the same belief to them in the life beyond the grave. I need not here repeat what I said before to prove the futility of such a position. Suffice it is to observe that I have keenly studied the laws or commandments of God as given in the Bible, and there is not a single word in them that cannot be fulfilled by man. Some there may be who evince a certain laxity in observing some of the said commandments, but the human race is not lacking in those who are or who have been true Muslims — obedient to those laws. The first four commandments, as given in Exodus, demand our staunch belief in the unity of God. The rest of the commandments have been observed by a larger portion of humanity, as without their enforcement no human society, even in its most primitive steps of development, can stand, even for a short time. A Moses is needed to enforce those commandments in a newly fledged society for its healthy development.

But to return. The said six laws compel our belief. If we wish to live as good citizens under the government of the Lord, and attain true success and happiness, we must look for those laws and sit at the feet of those who are their custodians and teachers. It is in this respect that the quoted verses of the Quran speak of the prophets and the Books they bring from God. The

Books come to reveal the Will of the Lord of His ways under which He rules all things in heaven and earth. There is one thing more which is so necessary to infuse in us a spirit strong enough to inspire an implicit obedience to law, and that is our belief in its unfailing and unavoidable working together, with its inexorability in the exaction of its penalties. In this connection, revelations from on High that belong to the various religious persuasions speak of certain sentient beings called Angels. According to Quranic teachings they are a body that bring Law and every force in nature into operation and keep them so. This is their function and the object of their existence. They act as a life or soul in everything in the universe. They set the faculties of nature in motion. I do not propose to enter into a long discussion of the subject, but merely to emphasize the fact that if we do need a strong belief in Law and our obedience to it, we can never achieve it unless we believe in the existence of beings like angels. It was in this light that I have named them in these pages the "functionaries" of Law.

We may or may not believe in any religious system, but we must and do believe in these verities. They are part and parcel of our health and happiness; and they ought to be the articles of faith in any religion which claims to have come from God. They are as follows:

1. Law.
2. God, as the source of Law.
3. Angels — functionaries of Law.
4. The Books — the record of Law.
5. The prophets — the intermediate persons who receive the first message from the Lord on the subject.
6. The Hereafter.
7. The Day of Judgment.

These are the seven verities spoken of in the Quranic verses which demand our belief, a belief which is given to them by every person in his mundane affairs.

The present is the mother of the future. The after-life is the child of the present life. The former evolves out of the latter. Matter, in its evolutionary course on the physical plane, receives its final perfection in the human frame, but it gives rise to another order — the order of morality, ethics, and spirituality. Life with the progressive element in it leaves the body at our death like the aroma from fruit or a flower. It is like a vapour, but it possesses vast potentialities for creating a great cloud full of healthy rain. But Law, as I said before, rules every step of progress in the course of evolution. It is in obedience to it that success or full development attends the progressive element in its journey. We therefore need a System of Law that may help us to work out our future life on the desirable lines so that we may secure a full measure of bliss in higher regions.

And the code of it must and can only come from the original Intelligence, source of all life and its progress; hence the necessity for a Revealed Religion to disclose the above-mentioned verities, with full details for working them out. Any other system of religion is but a nursery-tale, whose function it is to feed credulity and gratify the "child" in man. But the child matures one day in intelligence and judgment and begins to see things in the light of reason and culture. It is on this account that religions based on dogma and superstitions are becoming exiled from the lands of culture and advancement.

Before concluding these lines I should like to say a word on the Law of Remission as promulgated in the above-mentioned verses from the Quran:

> "God does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability; for it, is (the benefit of) what it has earned, and against it (the evil of) what it has wrought: our Lord! do not punish us if we forget or make a mistake; our Lord do not lay on us a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us; our Lord do not impose upon us that which we have not the strength to bear ..."

It is based on Equity and Justice, and satisfies every demand for

reason. The sacred Book, after mentioning our ability to abide by Law and then referring to our accountability for our actions, speaks of such mitigating circumstances as may avail to remit the penalty of Law for its breach. They are three in number:

1. Forgetfulness of Law, as in the case of Adam, according to the Quranic version (see 20 : 115 of the Quran).
2. Unintentional omission.
3. Inability under particular circumstances to meet the demands of Law.

No one can take exception to the logic and rationality of the provisions. They bring Divine forgiveness for our wrongs, but we must approach the Master of the Judgment for it in prayerful humility. The Quran for this reason has formulated the said three provisions in the form of a prayer.

THE END

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Islam — My Only Choice

In this booklet, the author compares the major world faiths as regards historicity, lives of the founders, beliefs, practices, and revealed scriptures, and shows why his choice of religion falls on Islam.

About the author

Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din (d. 1932) was a pioneer Muslim missionary to the West who established the famous Woking Muslim Mission in 1913 at the Woking Mosque in England, which operated for over fifty years. In the same year, he also started the renowned journal *The Islamic Review* from England. This Mission achieved tremendous success in correcting the false picture of Islam prevailing in Western countries, and gained a large number of British and other converts to Islam, the most famous convert being Lord Headley (d. 1935).

Born in India in 1870, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din qualified as a lawyer and advocate in the 1890s. Due to the intense Christian missionary activity among Muslims, the Khwaja was about to convert to Christianity in his student days when he came across the book *Barāhīn Ahmadiyya,* written in support of Islam by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the *Mujaddid* of the time and the Promised Messiah. This book opened his eyes to the truth of Islam and he joined the Ahmadiyya Movement, becoming one of its most prominent members and a close associate of the Founder. Later on, under Hazrat Mirza's inspiration and influence, he abandoned his legal practice to become a Muslim missionary.

Besides his work in England, the Khwaja also toured other countries in Europe, Africa and Asia during the 1920s to present the message of Islam. His public lectures were highly renowned. He also wrote several books on Islam, Christianity and comparative religion, many of which are now being re-printed by the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc., U.S.A.

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